



# SEARCHERS



DEDICATED TO POLISH AMERICAN FAMILY RESEARCH

"Preserving Our Past Since 1988"

No. 21 Fall 1999

## Diennikarstwo Polonijne w Buffalo

By Michael Drabik

One of the signs of prosperity in an established immigrant community was the emergence of the ethnic press. Smaller communities, unable to support a newspaper, often had representatives who acted as area reporters. All of the Polish fraternal organizations published newspapers covering fraternal news and national news of interest to the Polish American community, as well as news from their native land. Buffalo has a rich history in this area, having newspapers which are printed in several foreign languages. Unfortunately, only a few are still being published; and in most cases, they are printed in the language of the ethnic group, and English as well.

The very first Polish language newspaper printed in Buffalo was called *Ojczyzna* (the Fatherland). It commenced in 1885 and was co-owned by the editor, Stanislaw Slisz, and Josef Bork, a German East Side developer. He gave Slisz a free hand in running the paper but insisted that it support the democratic party. *Ojczyzna* was published twice weekly from offices located at 46 Broadway.

In 1887, the paper was purchased by Rev. Jan Pitass, pastor of St. Stanislaus parish in Buffalo. He renamed the newspaper *Polak w Ameryce* (the Pole in America). This publication endured until 1920, when it was sold again and renamed *Telegram*. Publication of this newspaper ended in 1926.

*Polak w Ameryce* reflected the views of Rev. Pitass and the Catholic church; but it also promoted American citizenship and the preservation of the Polish language, culture, and traditions. Microfilm

copies of *Polak w Ameryce* are available for viewing at the Butler Library on the campus of SUNY College on Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo.

Some of the smaller newspapers that appeared briefly in Buffalo are listed below.

*The Bocian* (1889) - Editor, Z. Slupski.

*Kukuryku* (1889) - Editors, Henryk Nagiel and J. Sadowski.

*Dzwon* (1887) - Editor, R. Dobrzelewski; founder, Rev. Antoni Klawitter of St. Adalbert's parish. This newspaper was printed twice monthly.

*Glos Wolny* (1887) - Editor, Jozef Zawisza. Its office was located at 1054 Broadway. In 1889, the paper was sold and renamed *Echo*.

*Echo* (1890) - Editors, Wagonis, Nagiel, J. Bernolak, Leon Olszewski, and Horbaczewski. The office was located at 932 Broadway. Publisher, J. Sadowski.

*Slowo* (1890) - Editors, Majowski and J. Zawisa

*Glos Ludowy* (1895) - Editor, A. Karwowski. This was a pro-independent church paper, published at 1017 Broadway, which appeared weekly.

*Djadel* (1896) - Editor, S. Seiger. This was an illustrated paper. It was sold in the same year and was renamed *Slonce*. It was printed at 637 Fillmore Avenue. The editor was Jerzy Mirowski. This paper soon became the official publication of the fraternal organization, Unia Polska w Ameryce. The publication was transferred to St. Paul Minnesota, and later to Chicago. Printing ceased in 1905.

*Kurjer Codzienny* (1892) - This was a radical view paper edited by Jozef Zawisza.

*Przegląd Tygodniowy* (1895) - Editor, Jan Wrzesinski.

*Szila* (1896) - This was weekly paper with a social-

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*Due to the large amount of mail received, please take note when writing us for assistance:*

The PGSNYS will answer ONLY correspondence that includes a self-addressed, stamped reply envelope. All correspondence should be directed to:

**The Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, 299 Barnard Street, Buffalo, New York 14206.**

If you wish to contact one of our committees, please write the committee name on the front of the envelope.

*Thank you*

*Submissions may be sent directly to the editor—either hard copy or disk (Microsoft Works or Microsoft Word)*

Dues are \$15 a year. All Members will receive all published editions of the Searchers. New members receive an information package to help them get started. Please check the mailing label on this copy of the Searchers to see on what date your dues are payable.

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### MEETING REMINDER:

The PGSNYS meets the second Thursday of each month in the Villa Maria College cafeteria, 240 Pine Ridge Rd., Cheektowaga, at 7 p.m.

## President's Message

In my first President's Message, I wanted to concentrate on five key issues. In this message I'm going to update you on our progress toward these goals:

### 1. Improve Communications

What the goal is: All meeting minutes of our monthly meetings and executive board meetings will be made available at the next month's meeting and will be sent to members with e-mail addresses.

**Update:** The meeting minutes have been passed out to members at each meeting; however, I've been slacking off in sending our meeting minutes via e-mail. I will strive, in the future, to have the minutes sent via e-mail in a timely manner.

### 2. Move a large portion of the holdings in our library to the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (downtown). Our goal is to move the library by the end of the year.

**Update:** Our Founder, Mike Drabik; Vice President, Lynn Mycek-Rzepecki; and I will be working to see this project through. We will be cross checking our current card catalog with the inventoried database we've created.

### 3. Publish our surname database. Our goal is to publish our surname database this year.

**Update:** By the time you read this mes-

sage, our society surname database will be published and sent to members who sent in their requests .

### 4. Update Our Membership Package.

Our goal is to have our Membership Package updated by the end of the year.

**Update:** Vice President, Lynn Mycek-Rzepecki says she's half completed the update.

### 5. Establish a Western New York Genealogical Council

What the goal is: To form an alliance with other genealogical societies in Western New York to help solve common problems that all genealogical researchers face.

**Update:** I've sent a letter of intent to all genealogical societies in the area. I've received favorable responses to my letter. A meeting was held on August 28. I'll fill you in more in my next President's Message as to how the meeting went.

### Conclusion

It appears as though these five goals will be reached by the end of the year. I'm grateful for the time and effort our society has put forth in reaching these goals. **Thanks!.**

Your President,  
David Newman



## Dziennikarstwo w Buffalo

ist viewpoint. The paper was transferred to Chicago and became the *Dziennik Ludowy*.

**Warta** (1898) - This weekly was published by the Independent Bishop, Stefan Kaminski. It ceased publication upon his death in 1911. This newspaper can be found on microfilm at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society at Nottingham Terrace in Buffalo.

**Harmonja** (1903) - This was a monthly paper and was the official publication of the Polish Singers Alliance.

**Gazeta Buffalowska** (1900) - Editor, Smolczynski; publisher, F.Olszanowski. Published at 1026 Broadway, the paper folded in 1908 when the editor left the area.

**Kurjer Buffalowski** (1907) - A weekly published by a Jewish corporation in Chicago. The corporation tried publishing papers in various cities across the country. The Buffalo editor was Wojciech Murawski. The endeavor didn't last long.

**Osa** (1904) - Editor, Stanislaw Kozielo-Paklewski. This was a humorous paper.

**Biluletyn** (1914) - Editors, Leon Olszewski and the Komitet Obywatelski. The newspaper promoted the Polish Army in France (The Haller Army).

**Unista** (1914) - The official paper of the Unia Polska w Ameryce.

**Nowy Wiek** (1906) - Editor, Stanislaw Slisz. In 1907, the *Nowy Wiek* became *Polak Amerykanski* and was owned by a corporation headed by Slisz, Hodkiewicz, and Mielewczyk. It was published at 559 Fillmore Ave. With the deaths of Slisz, in 1909, and Hodkiewicz, in 1910, the paper was sold to pharmacist, Skarzynski. It was then renamed the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich*. Microfilm copies of the complete run of the paper can be found at the Historical Society (After 1939, most issues reflect the national edition).

**Dziennik dla Wszystkich** (1911) - *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* was sold to Franciszek Ruszkiewicz, and family. Ruszkiewicz moved the offices to Broadway and expanded the newspaper to become one of the largest Polish language tabloids

published in the United States. After Ruszkiewicz's death, the paper was sold several times. It ceased operating in August of 1957, due to financial difficulties.

**Ave Maria** (1924) - Editor, S. M. Donata. This was a Polish religious monthly published by the Buffalo Province of the Felician Sisters. The pamphlet ceased printing upon the death of its editor.

This summary aims to give our readers an idea of the rich Polish language newspaper tradition that existed in our area. It is sad to say that only a fraction of the above-listed papers have survived in microfilm or hard copy.

## Project Proposal

By Edward W. Kornowski

My goal is to create a death notice index using obituary notices from *Dziennik Dla Wszystkich* (Everybody's Daily).

We are very fortunate, to have copies of *Dziennik Dla Wszystkich*, the Polish Language newspaper, in the Buffalo, New York, area. This paper contains death notices of local Polish immigrants. They usually contain the person's age, where they were born, and sometimes, the village name. Usually, the name of the spouse and children were also listed.

My proposal is to ask members to volunteer to copy names from these local obituaries. There are approximately 533 months of obituary columns available which cover the years 1911 to 1957. To date, we have indexed about 18 months. I have found that it takes me about one hour to copy data for one month of 1930.

Members could choose which months or years they wish to record, which may help them in their own family research. The earlier years are of utmost importance, but due to time scheduling, the work may have to be continued at the downtown library, which has the later years of the paper.

Pat, at the Erie County Historical Society, has agreed to loan some films, via interlibrary loan, to the Butler Library located at Buffalo State College

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## POTPOURRI

### Polish Genealogical Societies

Polish Genealogical Societies are getting older. Last year, we observed our tenth anniversary. This year, the Polish Genealogical Society of California is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Best wishes!

### Library

Check out our library holdings. An interesting article, written by Fred Hoffman, about Polish bookstores and related items, appeared in the May 1999 issue of *Rodziny* (PGS). It may contain information on that special book or gift you have been looking for. Check it out.

### PGSA Annual Conference

The PGSA held its annual conference on Oct 22 and 23, 1999, at the Copernicus Center in Chicago, IL. The conference was entitled *Coming to America*.

### The National Geographic

Another major magazine is beginning publication in Polish. It's the National Geographic, which is known for its informative text and impressive photos of natural and man-made landscapes. The magazine is currently being printed in a dozen foreign languages.

### An American Astronaut in Poland

Elma native, Jim Pawelczyk, visited Poland this spring. Pawelczyk is an astronaut in the U.S. Space Program, who orbited the earth 256 times in his 16 days in space. He took a Polish flag along with him on the flight. The *Am Pol Eagle* named him "Citizen of the Year" in 1998.

### Archive Puts Huddled Masses Online (Volunteers scanning Ellis Island Records)

Climbing the family tree will take less clawing as soon as a nonprofit foundation finishes a more than \$15 million project to post Ellis Island immigration records on the Internet. The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation is working on the ambitious project of gathering information on the more than 17 million people, who immigrated through the port of New York from 1892-1924. Those were the peak years for Ellis Island processing. Data are being taken directly from the ships' passenger manifests, which are currently on microfilm at the National Archives and Records Administration. These valuable documents are, for the

first time, being digitized and entered into an electronic database for easy access. Eleven fields of information are included: Immigrant's given name, immigrant's surname, ship's name, port of origin, arrival date, line number on manifest, gender, age, marital status, nationality, and last residence (town & country).

For a nominal fee, visitors will be given the opportunity to receive a printout of their family's data as well as a scanned reproduction of the original ship's manifest on which their ancestor's entry appears, and a picture of the ship on which they arrived. There will be something of interest to everyone in this database, which will contain information on a wide range of immigrants in addition to those who came through Ellis Island. It will include approximately 50 brief, multimedia presentations, providing a broad overview of immigration patterns from specific countries and regions. The first phase of the Center is scheduled for completion in late 2000. Future plans call for making the Immigrant Arrival Records accessible via the Internet and expanding the database to include additional years and ports of entry. For more information check out <http://www.ellisland.org/history.html>

### Western New York City Directories

Thanks to the generosity of Mary Buszka, Buszka Funeral Home on Clinton Street in Buffalo, our society has added 35 city directories to its library.

#### Hamburg City Directory

1970, 1971, 1974, 1976, 1980

#### East Aurora City Directory

1975, 1979

#### Buffalo Southeast Suburban Directory

(including Lackawanna, West Seneca and part of Orchard Park)

1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977-1978, 1979

#### Buffalo Southtowns

(including Aurora, East Aurora, Blawie, Elma, Orchard Park)

1983, 1984

#### Buffalo City Directory

(including Lackawanna)

1982, 1985

#### Tonawandas

1981, 1983

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## Potpourri

### Buffalo Northeast Suburban

(including Amherst, Cheektowaga, Depew, Eggertsville, Kenmore, Sloan, Snyder, Town of Tonawanda and Williamsville)

1966, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983

### Buffalo Suburban

1983

### The Onion Festival

Parishioners of St. Barbara's parish in Lackawanna and members of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State made a two-day trip to Orange County's 60th Anniversary of Dozynki, the name of a Polish Onion Festival in Florida, New York, in the Hudson Valley. Jimmy Stir and Lan Lewan performed at the pageant there on August 15. The trip was organized by Daniel J. Kij and Dorothy Mozg. The festival also pays tribute to the immigrant groups of Ireland, Italy, and Germany, who settled in Orange County.

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## Project Proposal

on Elmwood Ave. She is aware of our project and wishes to assist us. The hours at the Butler Library may be more suitable for most of us.

We need to keep a record book as to who is recording which time periods, and months we have already finished so that we do not duplicate our efforts.

**Guidelines for recording.** The obituary usually appears two or three times. We only need to copy the date of the first publication of the obituary. Also, five to ten days after the obituary first appeared, a Thank You or *Podziekowie* was sometimes printed. If you see these, please record this notice on the date it appeared. I'm sure researchers would be interested in this notice, as well.

When doing this work, you will notice many interesting articles or pictures in the paper. If you feel you may want to go back and copy it later on, make a note of those which appear to be of interest to you, noting the date of the edition in which the article appeared. Knowing where to find the article will save you time at a later date.

This project will take quite a while to complete. The index pages that are done will be available for members to examine. Hopefully, when the project is finished, we will be able to provide the library, and the historical society with a printed index that all genealogists will find helpful to them. We may even be able to create a database to be available via the computer.

Thanks in advance to all volunteers, this effort will be appreciated by genealogists who will follow in our footsteps.

If you need advice or have questions e-mail Ekornowski@aol.com

## Polonia Wisconsin

By Michael Drabik

At the Society's May 13, 1999, meeting, we were pleased to welcome one of our members, Scott Graykowski. This may not seem to be a big deal but, in this case, it was. You see, Scott is not a local member; he resides in the St. Paul, Minnesota, area. He was in town on business and also wanted to do genealogical research in the Dunkirk, New York, area from which his family moved. We are also thankful to Scott for a donation he made to our society's library—a 16-page pamphlet, which is an interesting addition to our library. This publication was issued at the dedication of the Polish Heritage Highway (Highway 66) in Portage County Wisconsin, on May 24, 1998.

Contributors to this pamphlet were Adeline Sopa and Boleslaw and Anna Kochanowski. Their accounts of this area may be of interest to many Western New Yorkers, since there is a tie with Kaszubs from our area who settled in Wisconsin. Portage County is one of the oldest Polish settlements in America.

According to Sopa's essay, this area, which was later named Polonia, was established when a young Polish priest took his parish—building, parishioners and all—and moved it a mile and a half down the road! Father Jozef Dabrowski, was the man responsible for establishing the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Detroit (now known as Orchard Lake,



Michigan) and was a personal friend of Ks. Jan Dziekan Pitass of Buffalo.

Rev. Dabrowski had no means to control the unruly behavior that occurred on Sunday mornings while mass was being celebrated in the parish church. Barkeepers, who did not respond to his pleas, could not believe it when they saw the building being dismantled. The move did not please everyone, for the bars lost customers and those living nearby were upset because they now had to travel further to get to church. The result was the establishment of the first Independent Polish Church in America. This parish was short lived, as members soon returned to their pastor and the Catholic Church.

Five Felician nuns came to Polonia from Krakow in the fall of 1874. They began their work in a parish school and their order spread across all the Polish settlements in America. Sopa mentions that the August Kluczykowski family settled in this area in the 1860's. Kluczykowski is one of the families Scott Graykowski is researching.

This pamphlet is filled with interesting facts about the early Polish community in Portage County, Wisconsin. I hope that you can take advantage of this wonderful work to learn more about the Polish experience in Wisconsin and America.

## Polish Immigration in The U.S.

*By Julitta Grocholska*

### Introduction

#### *This is Part I of a four-part series*

When a visitor to Southern Poland, and especially Podhale, asks the priest in a village or in a small town how many parishioners he has, the answer is "so and so, but now half of them are in the U.S., mostly in Chicago". Certainly, in this statement there is a touch of exaggeration, because the emigration from other regions is even higher; it is mostly to Western European countries (Germany) (*Rocznik Statystyczny Wojewodztw*, 1996). The proportion could vary according to locality, but it

means that Poland, as well as its southern region, is still an area of emigration and temporary staying abroad.

In the late '60s and '70s, during communist rule, the Polish government organized an annual competition among the towns and villages for the prize and title "Champion of Good Management." The winner, in addition to the title, obtained a certain amount of money, which gave him the funds for new investments. It created a real opportunity for local communities to take initiative and decide how to improve the living conditions, education, cultural life, etc.

The Nowy Sacz Region with its capital, Nowy Sacz, was several times a winner. Other towns situated in Southern Poland also won this award. I remember my feelings, when I first visited this area. The spirit of good management and local initiative was visible even in the communist realm. This relative abundance and amelioration observed in many households had its origin in the local spirit and was supported with foreign capital.

After the collapse of the communist regime in Poland and the transformation from a planned society to a market-oriented economy, local initiative has been under a management training agreement with National-Louis University from Chicago. A higher school of business, National Louis University (WSBNLU), was founded in Nowy Sacz and started its activity on October 1, 1991, with a bachelor degree [licencjat] program. Now it ranks at the top of the list of the best business colleges in the country. Its aspiration is to train young people, not only from the Nowy Sacz region and other parts of Poland, but also to educate students from other Central and Eastern European countries. [Look for "Three Waves of Polish Immigration to the U.S." in the next edition of the Searchers.]

*[Editor's note: This is a scholarly work about Polish immigration by Julitta Grocholska, wife of Michal Grocholski, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago. Although it focuses particularly on immigration from southern Poland to the Chicago metropolitan area, much of it is applicable to any place Poles have settled in America. Originally published by National-Louis University in Nowy Sacz, Poland, this is its second publication in the United States.]*



## The Dean

*By Michael Drabik*

Pick up any piece of historical material on Buffalo's Polish community and you will undoubtedly encounter the name of the founder of the first Polish parish in Western New York, Rev. Jan Pitass. Pitass is also credited with being the pioneer leader of the then emerging Polonia in the area. His name resounded not only on a local level, but he was also a nationally known figure in Polish settlements across the United States. Who was this man who has left such an impression on the Polish community that, 85 years after his death, he is still remembered and remains a topic of debate?

Jan Pitass was born to Mikolaj and Rozalia Kuna Pitass on July 3, 1844, in the Prussian held land of Silesia. After finishing his elementary school education in Piekary, he matriculated in schools in Gliwice and Raciborz. He displayed an interest in entering the priesthood and was sent to study theology in Rome, Italy, in 1868.

In 1873, the Rev. Ivan Gartner, a Bohemian priest serving in the United States, met the young seminarian and told him about the need for Polish speaking priests in this country. Father Gartner gave young Pitass the funds needed for the journey to America and a letter of introduction to Bishop Ryan, the Ordinary of Buffalo. Seminarian Pitass arrived at Suspension Bridge, New York, in May 1873 and was directed by Bishop Ryan to Niagara University to prepare for ordination and his assignment amongst the growing Polish community.

Although Jan Pitass is honored as the first pastor of St. Stanislaus parish and founder of the community, he was not the first Polish priest to serve in the area. The Rev. Jan Zawistowski was pastor of St. Francis church on Hertel Avenue for a ten-year period prior to the arrival of Pitass. The Rev. Franciszek Szulak, a Jesuit missionary, also made stops in Buffalo to attend the needs of Poles living in Western New York.

Within a month of his arrival, Jan Pitass was ordained by the bishop. On June 8, the feast of the Holy Trinity, Rev. Pitass celebrated his first mass at St. Michael's church on Washington Street, with his

former schoolmate, Rev. Karol Langner, assisting. Immediately following the Mass, Rev. Pitass met with the eager Poles and organized the first Polish parish in Western New York, that of St. Stanislaus, bishop and martyr. The nucleus of this parish was organized a year earlier when Rev. Gartner encouraged the Poles to form a religious society of the same name. Eighty-two families expressed a desire to form a parish and pledged their financial support.

The young pastor began soliciting funds for his church, but the Poles were new arrivals and had little or no money. He was granted permission by the bishop to collect funds throughout the city, which Pitass personally did. He met with much opposition, but he did not give up. While collecting funds, he made the acquaintance of a German real estate speculator, Josef Bork, who offered the newcomer land for the building of his church. This was a most welcome offer and gratefully accepted. With the donated land, Pitass utilized the monies collected for construction materials. The cornerstone for the wooden structure of St. Stanislaus church was laid in September of 1873 with Bishop Ryan and Rev. Nagel of St. Mary's church participating. Several German church societies also were on hand to observe this occasion. In January of 1874, the church structure was ready for use.

With a church of their own, the Poles migrated toward the area in which it was built. They bought land from Mr. Bork to build homes and established their own community around the parish. Due to the number of new arrivals, Pitass realized there was a need for a parochial school for the children of the community. He began instruction of children in the church building in April of 1874 with the assistance of a few male teachers. Eight years later, but not without controversy, Pitass' request for teaching nuns was answered when three Felician nuns arrived from Polonia, Wisconsin. By this time (1881), the parish had about 1,000 families. In 1906, the sisters were placed in charge of the entire school population. Prior to this time, Pitass had insisted that the boys be instructed by male teachers.

On a daily basis, new Poles arrived in Buffalo and Rev. Pitass soon became an overseer of their



welfare, their religious leader, and their friend. The vicinity of the church became a business strip, with many businesses run by Poles, and provided necessary services and merchandise for residents. Soon the small wooden structure could no longer accommodate the swelling number of parishioners and Fr. Pitass needed to address the problem.

While visiting the Rev. Wincenty Barzynski, the pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka parish in Chicago, he was able to observe how this pastor was able to cope with the growing Polish population in the Windy City. The new church that Barzynski built was constructed with an upper and lower church, a plan that Pitass later adopted here in Buffalo. Ground-breaking ceremonies for a new two-level Romanesque church were held on August 10, 1882, with the cornerstone being laid in May of 1883. In October of 1886, the huge hewn-stone edifice was ready for dedication and blessing. Much fanfare and pomp accompanied this dedication and was celebrated by the entire Polish community of Western New York.

It has been said that Pitass left the steeples of his church unfinished for years, as other parishes were founded and new churches erected. Once the other buildings were finished, he is said to have continued construction on his steeples, making them taller than all the others.

While Pitass was enjoying the glory of building such a magnificent house of worship, dissatisfied parishioners successfully appealed to Rome for permission to form a new parish in Buffalo. St. Adalbert parish was founded in 1886 and was located a quarter of a mile from St. Stanislaus church, by Pitass' assistant, Antoni Klawitter. Rev Jan's idea of keeping all of the Polish community in one large parish was challenged and defeated.

Even though the new parish was separate from St. Stanislaus, Pitass' influence with Bishop Ryan was noticed and affected the appointment to the pastorate. This was so pronounced that, in March of 1895, when Bishop Ryan selected Rev. T. Flaczek the new pastor of St. Adalbert, an open revolt was the result. Rev. Flaczek sought safety at the rectory of St. Stanislaus after he was threatened and police

intervention was necessary. One result of this revolt was the formation of a new, independent church, Holy Mother of the Rosary. It was known as the Polish National Catholic Church and was located on Sobieski Street, just a block from St. Adalbert's parish.

Although Pitass was not in favor of more Polish parishes in Buffalo in the beginning, he attended the needs of Poles throughout Western New York and Northern Pennsylvania (From Erie, Pa., to Salamanca and Batavia, N.Y.)

In 1889, Rev. Pitass was informed by the authorities of the German cemetery in Cheektowaga, New York, that the swelling Polish population would no longer be permitted burial in their facility. It was then that Father Jan purchased land, just past the Buffalo city line near Walden in Cheektowaga, for the purpose of establishing a cemetery for the Poles. Due to a state law, which did not allow burial within a five-mile limit of the center of the city of Buffalo, he was prevented from developing that land for a cemetery. He then found a suitable parcel on Pine Ridge Road, and this became the parish cemetery.

In 1892, there were 457 funerals from this parish alone. It is no wonder that the Germans wanted to safeguard their property for burial of their own parishioners. Pitass then individually bought the land he had purchased for the parish earlier and used it as his personal retreat. Many parish functions were held on the "Farma Ks, Pitassa". In his last will and testament, he designated a parcel of land to be used for the founding of a church for the Poles living in this area.

As was mentioned previously, Pitass' influence with the bishop was significant. In any situation dealing with the Polish population, the bishop sought out the advice of Fr. Jan. to such a degree that the bishop bestowed a special title, that of Dean of the entire Polish population of the diocese, upon Fr. Pitass in 1894. The purpose of this title was to keep order, maintain unity, peace, and discipline among the Polish priests and people. Two years later, Bishop Ryan died. His successor, Bishop



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## The Dean

Quigley, did not see the necessity of reconfirming the appointment. However, to the Poles in the area, He remained, Ks. Dziekan. Bishop Quigley did bestow the status of irremovable rector upon Rev. Pitass in 1901, and this assured him that he would remain pastor of St. Stanislaus parish until his death.

At that time, Fr. Jan was occupied with the cemetery project and the need for additional space for classes. All available rooms were being used, including the convent and rented houses. With a student population of over 1,300 in 1887, an immediate solution was necessary. A decade later, the number of students attending the school increased to over 2,000, with 22 nuns teaching.

A four-story, red-brick school building was built and dedicated in October 1890. Although the donations of his people were meager, Pitass was able to erect a huge parish complex. He was known to have been a strict disciplinarian, who enjoyed his school children, and especially liked when they sang him Polish hymns and songs.

Ks. Dziekan was a simple man. He required no fancy apparel nor palace in which to live and resided in the same rectory his parishioners built for him 30 years previously, with no luxuries or frills.

In 1885, Stanislaw Slisz became involved with Josef Bork, a real estate developer, and together they formed a Polish language newspaper called *Ojczyzna*, or the Fatherland. Bork gave his partner a free hand in the editing of the tabloid with the stipulation that the newspaper take a pro democratic party stance. Two years later, Rev. Pitass bought the newspaper and renamed it the *Polak w Ameryce*, or the Pole in America, keeping Slisz as editor. The newspaper stressed the church's position and that of Pastor Pitass. The *Polak w Ameryce* was an early advocate of the growing movement for a Polish bishop in America. Although the Polish population in this country grew and the number of parishes rose, the Church did not see a need for a bishop of Polish descent and this became a major issue around the turn of the century.

As earlier stated, Dziekan Pitass was known to the Polish communities across the country. A friend of Fr. Wincenty Barzynski of Chicago, Fr. Pitass was a close friend of Rev. Jozef Dabrowski, the founder of the Polish Seminary in Detroit. Pitass and Fr. Majer of Minnesota were co-founders of the Polish Union of America. In September 1896, under auspices of Fr. Pitass, the First Polish Catholic Congress was held in Buffalo, N.Y., at St. Stanislaus parish. There were 320 delegates from across the country in attendance.

The issues of the Independent church schism, a bishop of Polish descent, the Polish press, a secular organization, and the future of the Polish seminary were discussed. Five years later, again at St. Stanislaus, with Fr. Pitass as director, the Second Polish Catholic Congress took place. The same concerns were discussed and a resolution passed to support Revs. Wacław Kruszką and Dziekan Jan Pitass in an effort to plead the case for a bishop of Polish heritage before the Holy Father. As the date of departure approached, Pitass decided to withdraw from the delegation, but he convinced a New York congressman, Rowland Mahany, to accompany Rev. Kruszką in this noble crusade.

All visiting Polish dignitaries stopped at St. Stanislaus parish to be introduced to Dziekan Pitass. The autograph album at the rectory reflects the high regard shown for this community leader by both religious and secular individuals. The seventy-year-old pastor, who was in failing health, watched as the new parish rectory was being built and commented that it was not for him. In October 1913, Pitass suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed and confined to his bed. On December 11 of that year, the bells of the church tolled the death of the only pastor it knew in its 39-year history, Dziekan Jan Pitass.

His funeral attracted thousands of people, including Bishop Colton, Msgr. Baker, and 180 fellow priests (from the U. S.), who participated in the final rite. The funeral procession along Fillmore Avenue and Genesee Street stopped traffic for over an hour. Jan Pitass was laid to rest in the priest's and nun's circle of the parish cemetery he founded.



## Polish Genealogy on the Internet

By David Newman

### Polish Genealogical Societies' Web Sites

There are nine Polish Genealogical Societies (PGS) presently in existence. They are listed at the end of this article. Each Society has a web site that could be a link to your next genealogical treasure. In this column, I will review each PGS web site in the coming issues of this newsletter.

I've decided to start with the PGS of America, the largest of all the Polish genealogical societies, and leave the web page of our own society, PGS of New York State, for last.

The web site of PGS of America ([www.pgsa.org](http://www.pgsa.org)) is very well developed. Information is organized in a manner that is easy to navigate. Their home page has several categories of information to choose from. These categories remain on virtually every page so that you can access any one of these topics with one mouse click.

Following is a description of the topics found on their home page, what information you can find there, and what actions you need to take to aid you with your Polish genealogical research.

### Membership

You can find information on how to become a member of the society. Then, you can print a copy of their on-line membership application.

### Calendar

This is a calendar of events scheduled for the current year.

### PGSA Publications

The PGSA has several books and other genealogical information for sale. This section contains a listing of books, booklets, information packets and maps and how to obtain them. There is also a listing of articles from back issues of *Rodziny* (One of the newsletters of the PGS of America) by subject and by issue.

### Databases

There are several databases that the PGS of

America has compiled that can be researched online. Following is a listing of these databases.

### Dziennik Chicagoski Obituary Index

This index is a compilation of obituaries appearing in the *Dziennik Chicagoski*, Chicago's Polish daily newspaper, for the years 1890-1958. The Polish Genealogical Society originally published indexes for the years 1890-1920 as a series of four books, which are available at many libraries in the United States and for purchase through PGSA. The original indexing (1930-1958) was done by PGSA member, Jim Czuchra.

### Haller's Army Index

An estimated 20,000 Polish individuals answered the call to fight for freedom and the opportunity to regain Poland's independence during World War I in the Polish Army in France (in Polish, *Armia Polska we Francji*). They were recruited from among the Polish immigrants who came to America. The Polish Army in France was also called "Haller's Army," after the general who commanded it, or the "Blue Army," for the blue uniforms the soldiers wore.

### Jubilee Book Index

The only Jubilee book available online at this time is the 1917 St. Stanislaus Kostka Jubilee Book. Since work on the database is currently in progress, only surnames beginning with the letters A through K are presently listed. This section will be updated as additional surnames become available.

### PRCU Insurance Claim File Index

The Polish Roman Catholic Union of America was organized in 1882 as a mutual benefit society. It began selling fraternal insurance in 1887. While it started in Detroit, it later moved to Chicago.

Early death claims (before about 1912) were simply names entered in ledger books. Since there is no additional information listed, this is of little genealogical value. In later death claims, a death certificate became part of the claim.

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(Continued from page 11)

## Polish Genealogy on the Internet

If the person became a PRCUA member prior to 1912, it is unlikely that an insurance application exists (rumor has it that early applications were destroyed in a fire). It is possible to find applications in the claim packets of members who joined after 1912. The application is usually a good genealogical source, since it may include the name of the place of birth in Poland. It may also include data about the number of people in the applicant's family. The records index continues to about 1940.

Requests for information from the PRCUA records require a \$10 research fee (in US currency). Many of the original Polish Roman Catholic Union of America's insurance death claim files are now available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please see the PGS of America web site for more details.

### Resource Center

The resource center contains a lot of useful information pertaining to Polish Genealogy. Although this entire section is important, I've highlighted below some of the information that can be obtained here.

### Polish Military Bibliography

Useful in locating books of interest for obtaining Military data.

### Polish Museum Library Genealogical Collection

The Polish Museum houses the PGSA collection, along with many other materials of interest to researchers.

### Reference Collection Recommendations

Want to build a personal reference collection? PGSA compiled this guide to help you decide what may be a valuable addition for your genealogical history.

### Polish Archives Addresses

Where to write to request archival records.

### Polish Diocese Addresses

Where to write to request archival records.

### Polish National Archives directory.

### Genealogical Sources in Poland and Lithuania

Learn more about how to approach research on your Polish ancestors who came from Lithuanian lands.

### Kashub-Polish Surname Anthology

For those with a Kashubian background, learn more about your surname and its distribution in North America.

### Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings

Notes on selected surnames that do not appear in the second edition of this definitive work by Fred Hoffman.

### Polish Surname Index

William F. "Fred" Hoffman, Author of *Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings* compiled a list of Polish surnames with their meanings and origins. If you don't find your surname listed, you could ask him to research it for you.

### Geography/Maps

Links of maps of Poland and Polish Territories.

### History

Stories and links to Polish History:

### Polish History: A Guide

This guide is designed to help Polish descendants research their family's history, dating back to different times and places, in contemporary Poland.

### Order of the Virtuti Militari

This is a link to the web site regarding a book on the Polish Order of the Virtuti Militari and its Cavaliers 1792-1992. It was written by Prof. Dr. Zdzislaw P. Wesolowski, a colonel in the South Carolina State Guard (Reserve). Dr. Wesolowski was previously unable to locate the names of the



recipients of the Polish Order Virtuti Militari. It is the first book on the history of Poland, which lists all of the recipients of the Order since 1792. You can search for a surname and find out if any of your ancestors received this award. The rest of the page advertises the book.

### **Polish Military Bibliography**

A select bibliography and list of sources of Polish Military History for use in researching Polish Genealogy.

### **Polish Military Medals**

Dr. Zdzislaw P. Wesolowski also wrote a book on Polish Medals called *Polish Militaria: Scarcity Contributes to Value*. This is a link to another promotion about his work.

### **Galician Research - Historical Perspectives,**

A historical perspective of Galicia.

### **Poles of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

Historical look at Polish immigration to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### **Prussian Education**

A small article about the educational process in Prussian Poland in the 18th and 19th centuries..

### **Relationships of the So-Called "Dutch Populace" in Greater Poland**

An intriguing article discussing the fact that around 40% of the total composition of the populace described as "Dutch" at the beginning of the 18th century were Poles.

### **Heraldry**

For those interested in heraldry this section contains links with information on the subject.

### **Ships/Immigration**

Links to information regarding Ships and Immigration.

### **Arts/Customs**

This section contains well-written explanations of many well-known Polish customs. Also a few lyrics to songs are available.

### **Members Pages**

Links to PGS of America members Home pages.

### **Polish Forum**

This is a link to a web-based Polish Genealogy Forum. Many discussions relating to Polish Genealogy take place here. You can join in on any conversation.

In the next issue, I will give you information on the PGS of Texas.

### **List of Polish Genealogical Societies and their web site addresses**

PGS of America

[www.pgsa.org/](http://www.pgsa.org/)

PGS of California

[feefhs.org/pol/pgsca/frgpgsca.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/pgsca/frgpgsca.html)

PGS of Greater Cleveland, Ohio

[feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsoc.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsoc.html)

PGS of Massachusetts

[feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsma.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsma.html)

PGS of Michigan

[www.pgsm.org](http://www.pgsm.org)

PGS of Minnesota

[www.mtn.org/mgs/branches/polish.html](http://www.mtn.org/mgs/branches/polish.html)

PGS of the Northeast (CT)

[feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsct.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsct.html)

PGS of New Zealand

[feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsnz.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/frgpgsnz.html)

PGS of Texas

[www.pgst.org](http://www.pgst.org)

PGS of New York State

[www.pgsnys.org](http://www.pgsnys.org)

PGS of Wisconsin

[feefhs.org/pol/frgpgswi.html](http://feefhs.org/pol/frgpgswi.html)

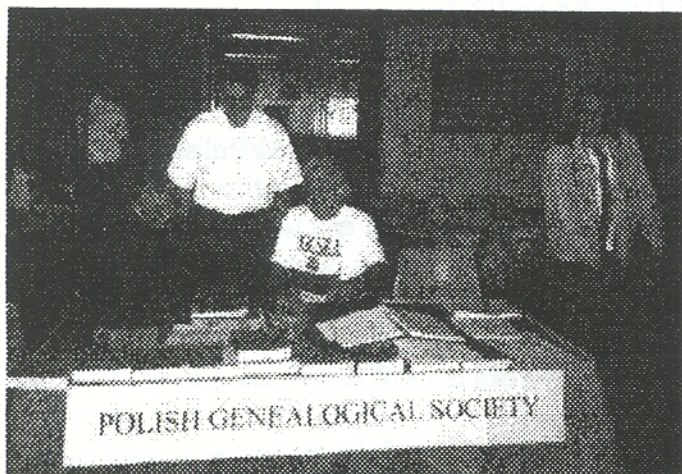
Worsten Genealogical Society: Poland

[feefhs.org/surname/frgworst.html](http://feefhs.org/surname/frgworst.html)



## W.N.Y. Genealogical Fair

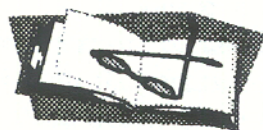
On October 9, 1999, members of the Polish Genealogical Society of Western New York attended the Western New York Genealogical Fair at the West Seneca Senior Center at 4625 Seneca Street. Ed Kornowski, member of PGSNYS, had a display of his Ancestral Research.



Mike Drabik, Daniel Kij (seated), and Keith Kaszubik (standing) viewing the Polish Genealogical Society display.



Mike Drabik (left) and Edward Prabucki (right) look over Ed Kornowski's Display of Ancestral Research.



### Book Review

By Laurie Bialoglowicz

### Goodbye Is Not Forever

A True Story

By Amy George

With Al Janssen

Harvest House (309 Pages, \$9.99)

*Goodbye Is Not Forever* is the true story of a Ukrainian family living under the rule of the Soviets and their separation before, during, and after World War II.

One morning Fyodor Wasylenko, a lawyer, arose early to partake in his favorite pastime, fishing. As he sat at the edge of the pond enjoying the solitude, three men came with a large net and brought it to the water's edge. Fyodor objected informing the men that the pond was only for pole fishing and not for commercial purposes. A fourth man, their leader and obviously a party man, had words with the fisherman and Wasylenko knew his movements would be carefully watched thereafter.

That fall three men came during the night and ransacked his house. It was only after they had completed their search that they identified themselves as the NKVD (later known as the KGB). He was arrested and taken away to an awaiting truck hidden at the edge of the village. Little Emma (Amy George) never knew her father. He was imprisoned in Siberia and it was many years before they heard he was still alive.

As a very young child, she was left home alone while her mother went off to earn some money so the family could survive. Being the wife of a dissident, she was only able to

obtain very menial labor such as shoveling coal onto railroad cars, and she returned home exhausted. Emma loved her home, located just outside the village of Drushkovka, but after the German occupation began, she and her family were taken to Germany to work for the Reich. There, the family was separated; however, Emma remained with her mother and spent her days alone wandering about the area where her mother worked.

After the war, Maria Wasylenko escaped from Germany with Emma and her other two children, Hanusia (Ann) and Tarasik (Thomas). They eventually came to the United States, but Emma's father was not allowed to leave the Soviet Union. It wasn't until forty years after he was taken away that she met her father when he was allowed to come to America for a brief visit with his family.

This is a tale of hardship, fear, love, and survival. Amy George aptly sums up her story when she states, "While there is much here that grieves the heart, there is much greater reason to rejoice as I see the hand of God on my life and the lives of my family".

I believe that others with East European backgrounds will enjoy reading *Goodbye Is Not Forever*. Some of us may even have relatives who have had similar experiences.





1940-Leo's Grocery--Mike's Grille  
1990-Vacant Building-Sycamore & Woltz

Above: A photo of the building at the corner of Sycamore Street and Woltz Avenue, which once housed Leo's Grocery Store and Mike's Grille, as it stood in 1990.

## A Sentimental Journey

*By Ed Prabucki*

Though many years have passed, I still live with memories of the years 1930-1945. The reason for this is that, as a youth, this time period held a certain mystique, even though it encompassed the years of the Great Depression and World War II. For my parents, it was an unpredictable, emotional time.

One day, I decided to take a sentimental journey through an area of Buffalo that I recalled from those years. I initiated my sojourn at Walden and Woltz Avenues. As I drove on, my mind summoned up numerous memories—some carefree and romantic, others sorrowful.

Thoughts of my excitement at a church bazaar my mother was occupied with, my first wages earned as a newsboy, and the many religious ceremonies I observed crowded my mind. During the days of my youth on Woltz Avenue, we gathered on porches and planned games we would play at Humboldt Park (now Martin Luther King Park). There were carefree evenings spent at Bess' Ice Cream Parlor at 15 Walden Avenue or Trans Alumni at Antoinette's, which was located at the corner of Sycamore Street and Fillmore Avenue. We trained by running around the wading pool at Humboldt Park for the annual Buffalopole Turkey

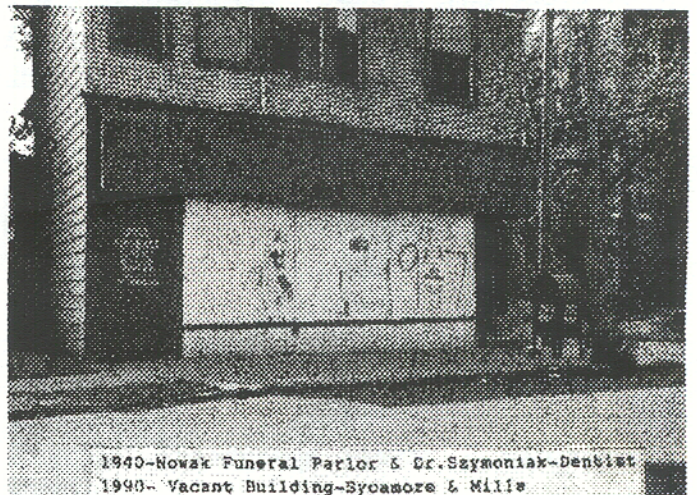
Run (Matt Urban, Buffalo's Medal of Honor recipient, won the race in 1939).

When I was in my late teens, I spent Tuesdays at St. John Kanty's social dances and Wednesdays at St. Luke's. I was convinced that anyone with dancing expertise commanded the attention of the girls at these dances. Among some of my most pleasant memories were those Easter Mondays I spent celebrating Dingus Day.

Then, the United States entered the World War in 1941. Streetcars on Sycamore and Genesee Streets operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to accommodate those employed at defense plants. After I celebrated my 18th birthday, I was employed at Bell Aircraft Company and, with money in my pockets, I spent evenings on double dates with girls from the First Ward.

One evening in the winter of 1942, after working overtime at Bell—void of close friends, the neighborhood dark with intrigue, the landscape covered with light snow—I boarded a Genesee street car for downtown Buffalo to relax and take in a movie at Shea's Great Lakes (one of several movie theaters located in downtown Buffalo during that time). Later, I made a stop at the Glass Bar or Drum Bar before returning home to rest prior to putting in another productive at Bell Aircraft.

*(Continued on page 16)*



1940-Nowak Funeral Parlor & Dr. Szymoniak-Dentist  
1990-Vacant Building-Sycamore & Mills

Above: The building at the corner of Sycamore and Mills as it stood in 1990. The Nowak Funeral Parlor and the office of Dr. Szymoniak, a dentist, were once located in this building.



(Continued from page 15)

## A Sentimental Journey

While at Bell, I had a crush on an attractive girl but, sadly, nothing came of this since another young man was also interested in her.



1940-Grandparents Petyk's Home-Usiak Drug Store  
1980-Vacant Home and Empty Lot-Syc. & Loepere

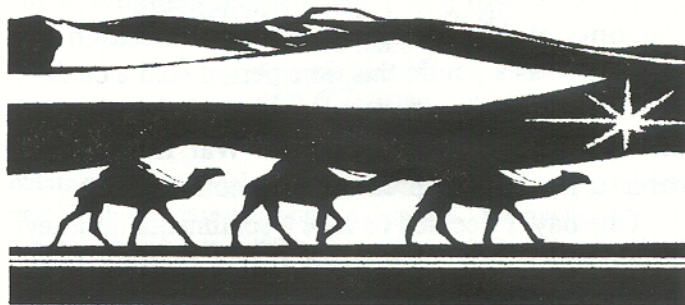
Above: This building on the corner of Sycamore and Loepere was the home of my grandparents, the Petyks, and also was the location of the Usiak Drug Store.

As I drove through this neighborhood, I hoped to see that some improvement had occurred since 1980. There was none. It was in 1980 that my mother expressed a desire to take a journey through the neighborhood of her childhood (Lombard and Gibson), the early years of her marriage, and the vicinity of the former Sattler's Department Store (at 998 Broadway). We drove down Broadway to

Swinburne Avenue where my brothers were born. Mother had tears in her eyes as she noted the deterioration of the neighborhood. Her final request was to travel through the area encompassed by Walden Avenue, Sweet Avenue, Genesee Street, and Loepere. As I sadly viewed the physical condition of the area, I heard my mother whisper, "Moj Bog, moj Bog, modlicie sie za nasze dzieci". Although lacking expertise in translation, I assumed she was saying, "My God, my God, pray for our children".

This phrase shows how she felt about the changes that took place in this part of Buffalo and echoes my sentiments, as well. Things are forever changing, not always for the better.

*Merry Christmas  
and  
A Happy New Year*



### POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

299 Barnard Street  
Buffalo, New York 14206

